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ABSTRACT

Arguing that listening is a skill that should be taught systematically in the schools, this paper presents a rationale and strategies for implementing listening instruction in the classroom. The paper first contrasts convergent and divergent thinking, noting that creativity and problem solving are in this latter mode. Next, it examines definitions of creativity and listening. It then describes how to implement listening instruction, and how to create the appropriate environment for teaching the following listening skills: prelistening strategies, listening strategies, listening for verbal and nonverbal cues, and listening for main and supporting ideas and learning to ignore irrelevant information. The paper concludes with six detailed creative listening activities. (HOD)

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Implementation of Creative Listening Strategies in the Classroom

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Abstract

This paper discusses convergent versus divergent thinking, definitions of creativity and listening; the components of creativity, how to implement listening in the classroom, pre-listening and listening strategies. Six detailed creative listening activities are in the conclusion.

Implementation of Creative Listening Strategies in the Classroom

There are two modes of thinking; convergent and divergent. 95% of school curriculum is developed to train convergent thinking. Convergent thinking is based on known facts. Example: 2 + 2 = 4 that is convergent thinking.

The other mode is called divergent thinking. Questions that reflect this mode are open ended. In other words a question can have more than one right answer. Creativity and problem solving are in the divergent thinking mode.

The definition of creativity is the ability to generate unique ideas. Creative thinking consists of three components. Fluency - the ability to generate many ideas. Example: How many different stimuli do we listen to? We listen to people speaking, radio, television, tape recorder, whistle on teapot, birds, and mechanical devices. Felxibility - the ability to generate ideas in many different categories. Example: How many different ways can students in the classroom respond to what they listen to; orally, written expression, pictorial representation, also nonverbal responses - like frowning, smiling, and slumping. These responses are in different categories because responding orally and slumping are behaviors that are

totally different. The last component is originality - the ability to generate unique responses.

Listening is traditionally defined as a language arts skill translated into meaning. The meaning not only includes spoken words but extends to nonverbal messages: such as body language. The different channels of communication through which the message can be delivered are linguistic, the paralinguistic, visual, and the kinesic.

Listening is a skill that should be trained systematically in the classroom. Formal training in listening should start in kindergarten with the prereadiness skills. Factors that influence listening are age, motivation, interest, scholastic aptitude, achievement, size of the vocabulary, organizational ability, reading comprehension, and listener fatigue.

There are two ways to implement listening in the classroom. The first is to teach listening in isolation, like reading is taught. The second way is to integrate listening skills with the other skill areas that are taught in school. Listening should be taught from simple to complex - in other words beginning formal lessons would contain one stimulus. The lessons would gradually become more complicated as more than one stimulus is presented at the same time. Example: The first lesson the students' listen to the drum beat. The second lesson the students listen simultaneously to the drum

beat and door shutting intermittantly. Then the lessons become increasingly more complicated.

In setting the stage to teach listening skills you have to create the appropriate environment.

1. Pre-listening Strategies.
   a. The students should become very still and mentally prepare to listen.
   b. They should have the appropriate materials and be physically prepared to listen by selecting the right seat in the classroom.

2. Listening Strategies
   a. The students should be taught to listen to verbal organizational cues. Example: The teacher says: "Our topic will be discussed under three major headings."
   b. Sequences of information can be arranged according to time, space, position, degree, or some other relationships.
   c. Mental reorganization can be taught with materials that is low in meaningfulness. Example: Chemical symbols or bones in the hand or arm. The students may record them to bring tighter organization to the task.

3. Listening for verbal and non-verbal cues,
   a. Verbal cues include "in summary", "as a result", "a key point", and "last but not least". Verbal cues also include voice inflection, voice emphasis, and variation in speaking pace.
   b. Non-verbal cues include eye contact, gestures, facial expressions, varied body positions (for example, standing up when an important point is made, facial expressions, and pauses between words, phrases, or thoughts.)

4. Listening for main and supporting ideas and learning to ignore irrelevant information.
   a. Have students listen to a short selection and suggest a title.
   b. Tell a short story and have students summarize it in one sentence.
   c. Give three statements, one containing a main idea and two containing subordinate ideas. Have students identify each statement.

Creative Listening Activities

1. The Silence Game. Montessori teachers play a Silence Game, developed by Maria Montessori, to prepare children for listening. They ask the children to "make a silence," and hold their bodies totally quiet and still. They relax the feet, the legs, and the entire body. When everyone is completely peaceful and quiet, the teacher speaks softly, "We're going to listen, then, we'll talk about what we heard." The groups sit and listen. After a few moments, still speaking softly, the teacher asks each child in the group, "What did you hear?" and the children respond.

Spin-offs:

a. After the children have played the Silence Game a number of times, their responses may be taped and played back to them.

b. Write a class poem from the list of things the children heard.

c. Base a choral reading on their list.

d. Translate their sounds into creative movement.

e. Add you own (A.Y.O.) spin-offs.

2. Sound Walks. Invite you class to share a walk with you. Keep a fast-moving pace. Return to the classroom

and discuss the sounds heard on the walk. Write the sounds on the board as the children give them. (There probably won't be very many.) Before the class has a chance to become restless, announce that they are going on another walk. This usually meets with suprise and delight. Walk exactly the same route as before, only this time, pause frequently, slow down, take your time to take things in. Return to the classroom and discuss the specific sounds heard on the walk. Write these sounds next to the list of sounds from the first walk. There should be a sharp contrast between the two groups of words. This contrast will provide a focus for discussion about how alert and aware we can be if we decide to really use our natural ability. A group of third graders took the two walks and compiled their lists.

First Walk (Fast)	Second Walk (Slow)
We heard:	We heard:
street noises	a car starting
traffic noises	an airplane zoom
birds	a loud car muffler
children talking	a dog barking
the teacher talking	our shoes shuffling

"I wonder how many things we miss seeing and hearing every day when we're in such a hurry and don't pay attention?" is a question that usually provokes responsive answers. Children will draw conclusions from the experience as they share their feelings and words. Following naturally from your discussion, a variety of activities will suggest themselves.

Spin-offs

a. Have the children draw a picture of the walk or one aspect of it.

b. The class can write a story, newspaper report, or picture-story about the walk.

c. Let the children draw cartoons showing the contrast between the two walks.

d. Use movement and pantomime to demonstrate the slogan, "Take your time and take things in!"

e. Use the words on the board as a resource and write letters to pen pals, family, friends, or another class describing the experience

f. Make up a puppet show about the walk.

g. Write about the two walks in journals.

h. Use the tape recorder to make up a radio interview of two people who went on a short walk and a long walk and are discussing their findings.

i. Share the experience by making up a route at home and inviting a friend or a brother or sister to take the two walks.

j. Add your own (A.Y.O.) spin-offs.

3. Listen Here. Wouldn't it be wonderful if every classroom had a small space, a special place, where a few children at a time could sit quietly listening and thinking. It could have a name of its own and have a throw rug or some floppy pillows to sit on, a pack of inexpensive postcards of beautiful paintings to look at, a music box with a very delicate chiming song to listen to, and some thoughtful books to read. Add a small plant, pussywillows, or dried cornstalks to smell and touch, a notebook to which a child's own thoughts could be added, and crayon and drawing paper to use if one wanted to. It would be a special thinking, feeling, listening place where children could discover the peacefulness within themselves.

4. Bring in a Sound. R. Murray Schafer, a Canadian composer and teacher who is doing fascinating experimental work with listening education, describes silence as "a pocket of possibility. Anything can happen to break it." Schafer asks students to bring an interesting sound to class. Some of the sounds students have shared are a balloon filled with air, then the air is gradually let out, a metal clacker, and a music box. A boy repeated the word

"animal" over and over. He observed that the more he repeated it, the less it seemed to fit the thing it represented and the more it became a lulling sound with no meaning.

Spin-off Ask the children to bring in something from outdoors that makes a sound, something that they find. On a clear day, a break from indoor education is always refreshing and this assignment usually guarantees interesting results and effective exchanges of observations and ideas. Students have brought in and demonstrated the sounds of:

dry grass

small pebbles

acorns

pieces of old newspaper

clumps of dirt in discarded paper cups

dead branches of trees

5. "Bird-Wirds". Elementary school children and college students are asked to spend a week listening extra carefully to the sounds of birds and try to find words that describe the sounds. At the end of the week, the classes of children and adults shared their findings. Here is a partial list of their "bird-wirds."

"Bird-Wirds"

cheer cheer chipr	drink your tea	whistle
kay kow kay kow	crook crook	arrogant
zzzzzzzeeeeeee	c'mere c'mere	dominate
good morning	not now not now	scold
all is well	eat eat eat	lullaby

This experience is a wonderful people exercise to discover how tuned up you can be if you don't tune out.

Spin-offs

a. Tape the sound of birds
b. Tape the children's "bird-wirds."
c. Paint a mural of birds and interspers the "bird-wirds" with the pictures so that when you look at the mural you will imagine that you hear it, as well as see it.
d. Find poems on birds and see how many descriptive "bird-wirds" are used to convey their sounds.
e. Improvise creative movement using birds as inspiration.
f. Cut out pictures of birds and make individual collages using the cutouts and the "bird-wirds" for designs.
g. Experiment with musical instruments to find a way of conveying the sound of birds.

h. Make bird puppets and present a sound-filled puppet show.

i. Write poems about birds and their song using the "bird-wirds" as a resource.

j. Listen to paintings; listen to houses; listen to trees. With Magical Ears, encourage your class to look at a painting or a photograph and imagine the sounds of it. Children of all ages have listened to seascapes, landscapes, cityscapes, and caught rhythms, colors, dialogues, music, and words. My favorite artists are Monet and Renoir, and I have always shared their paintings with all of my classes. We have listened as carefully to great canvases with our ears as we have looked with out eyes. Tune up your own Magical Ears and imagine the sounds, words, and songs in all the interesting places in the world.

k. One of my favorite experiences that I have shared with children and adults of all ages is listening with your whole body and soul.

Relax, stretch out, lie down, close your eyes. Imagine that your body has thousands and thousands of tiny pinpricks on it, so small that you can't even see them. Listen to the music and imagine that it must go through all those tiny pinpricks

before it can get inside of you. Once it gets through, it flows into all the parts of you and fills you. If you really listen with all your powers of concentration and imagine how the music is trying to get inside of you, after a while, it will make you want to move. You might want to move just a hand or your head. It doesn't matter. You will be filled with the music and it will decide how you want to move.

I have played everything from Greek folk music to Copeland's Billy the Kid, from American Indian chants to Rossini's William Tell Overture, and have found the response consistently enthusiastic. When I introduced the exercise to preschoolers, I was happily surprised at their excitement. They talked about the "music coming in and filling us up" for weeks afterward, which is rare for children that young.

It would seem that even preschoolers are aware of how fragmented our lives have become and are hungry for opportunities to truly give themselves to experiences.

6. Share Something from the Five Senses. From the thousands of stimuli we receive each day and usually forget, everyone (including you) chooses one sight, sound, smell, taste, and touch to share with the class orally, written,

through movement, art, music or improvisation. A good time for sharing is immediately after lunch, because everyone is feeling relaxed. This exercise in gathering sense impressions each day really affects awareness and appreciation for the ordinary miracles of every day.

Spin-offs

a. Have the children keep journals in which to jot down their five sense items each day.

I saw a jet plan
I smelled cut grass
I touched the tire on my bike
I tasted Chocolate milk
I heard Cat Steven's new song

Don
Grade 5

b. This exercise lends itself to one of the most immediately successful creative writing exercises that I know. Use the word series based on the senses: I see, I smell, I taste, I touch, I hear and add, if you want to, I feel or I know. Together with your students write a "sense" poem on the board.

c. Write five daily sense impressions of five slips of paper and deposit them in shoeboxes marked "Sights, Sounds, Smells, Tastes, Touches." Use them as

resource material for numerous follow-up activities.

Once a week, or whenever you want to, empty the slips of paper out of one of the shoeboxes and have the children sit around and look at all the sounds they listened to and gathered over the last week. They may choose any one of the sounds they want to illustrate or write about. Or the class can write a group poem composed of their favorite sounds from the shoebox or design a bulletin board of pictures and sounds under the heading, "Last Week We Heard."

If you add the dimension of listening to whatever subject you are studying or discussing, learning will be enriched and imagination and appreciation will be developed. For example, if you are discussing winter, one of the sub-topics of your focus could be "Let's stop for a few minutes and listen to winter. Imagine the sounds of winter. What winter sounds could we record on our magical tape recorder?" This is a hushed time for listening, imagining, and sharing.

Spin-offs

a. Share photos or paintings as inspiration for listening.

b. Take a winter walk and listen to winter sounds.

c. Listen to familiar music like "Frosty, the Snowman" or "Rudolph, the Red-Nosed Reindeer" or unfamiliar "winter" music like The Planets by Holst.

d. Listen to stories like "The Snow Queen" by Hans Christian Andersen or "The Snowy Day" by Ezra Jack Keats.

e. Listen to poetry like "Stopping by the Woods on a Snowy Evening" by Robert Frost.

f. Explore the feeling of winter by expressing words, such as melting, chunky, crunchy, quiet, deep, cold, hard, through movement.

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